

Congress in History and Transition

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Instructor

John Lawrence has taught the Congress research seminar at UCDC since 2013 after spending 38 years as a staff person in the U.S. House of Representatives, the last eight as chief of staff to Speaker Nancy Pelosi. He is the author of *Arc of Power: Inside Nancy Pelosi's Speakership 2005-2010* (University Press of Kansas, 2022) and *The Class of '74: Congress After Watergate and the Roots of Partisanship* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), as well as many articles on Congress and national politics appearing in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Hill* and other publications. He blogs on American politics at **DOMEocracy** (johnlawrence.wordpress.com), tweets at @johnlawrencedc and appears weekly on The Laura Coates Show on XM-Sirius radio. He also is the author of *The Undiscovered Archives of Sherlock Holmes* (MX Publishing, 2022) and other short Holmes stories. He has a Ph.D. in U.S. history from the University of California (Berkeley), and an undergraduate history degree from Oberlin College.

Description

This course will focus on the organization and operations of Congress and the American government during a period of great economic, cultural and political disruption: the coronavirus pandemic and related societal disruptions; the 2022 mid-term election; and the sharply divided public attitudes reflected in the hyper-partisan atmosphere of US politics and society more broadly.

Congress and other branches of the U.S. government were designed nearly two and a half centuries ago under circumstances and reflecting values and philosophies that bear little resemblance to contemporary America. All of these institutions have evolved over time in response to changing conditions domestically and internationally. The American electorate has undergone significant evolution as well, markedly during the last half century. All of these factors place dramatic and consequential pressures on government, elected officials and voters. How are they responding and what successes, failures and changes can we anticipate?

Requirements and Evaluation

Course requirements are: (1) regular class attendance and participation; (2) one research paper of 10 pages on an assigned topic; and (3) two 3-4 page papers on assigned topics focusing on knowledge of class materials and critical thinking. **All papers should be submitted to john.lawrence@ucdc.edu as WORD attachments.**

Please note that **this is a seminar and as such, student participation is expected from all class members**. Students who enroll should be prepared to engage in classroom dialogue, which affects grading.

- **NOTE:** *Student discussions should reflect knowledge of the readings and other scholarly materials rather than simply statements of one's personal opinions. All points of view are invited and welcome.*
- **PLEASE NOTE:** *This class will involve discussion of contemporary and historic public policies that some students may find sensitive. Some readings may contain offensive language. All class members are reminded that discussions must respect the opinions of other students regardless of disagreement on political viewpoints so that all students feel free to express their views.*

Classroom Conduct

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation.

Statement on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence (Link to an external site.)

(Links to an external site.) Click on this link for the University of California statement on sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Students who wish to report sexual misconduct or to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct may do so with any UCDC faculty or staff, or contact Debbie Deas, Director of Student Services (debbie.deas@ucdc.edu, 202-872-8937). ***Please note that because the University California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.***

Covid compliance: All students must comply fully with masking, social distancing and other policies implemented by UCDC to ensure the safety of all members of the community.

ADA Accommodations for Students

Any student requiring accommodations for class should inform the instructor at the first class meeting (if not earlier). In compliance with the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Public Law 93- 112) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336), University of California policy prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability in its programs, services, and activities.

Grading

Research Paper): 50%

DUE: TBA

Shorter papers (30%)**DUE: Several Dates****Class Participation (20%)**

NOTE: Papers are due at 11:59PM on the due date. Late submissions will be subject to grade reductions unless previously authorized in writing by the instructor. All times are Eastern Time.

Policy on Original Work and Use of Sources

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonest scholarship. All materials submitted for this class must be original work prepared for this class. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. **Unfamiliarity with these behaviors is not an adequate defense.**

Readings are available online and/or on Desktop.**Class Meetings****1. Class Introduction**

During this introductory class during, we will introduce ourselves and our expectations for the class, review the syllabus, and identify key topics to be covered.

Reading

- Ron Brownstein, “The House reached a stunning new milestone this year” (CNN) (June 21, 2022) <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/21/politics/house-democrats-vote-unity/index.html>
- Dan Balz, “Watergate happened 50 years ago. Its legacies are still with us,” *WP* (June 12, 2022) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/06/12/watergate-trust-government-reforms/>
- John Lawrence, “Much of What We See in Washington Today Started 50 Years Ago This Week,” *The Hill* (June 14, 2022) <https://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/352244-much-of-what-we-see-in-washington-today-started-50-years-ago-this-week/>
- David Price, “A Departing House Democrat Traces 30 Years of G.O.P. History” *NYT* (April 18, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/18/us/politics/david-price-republicans-democrats-midterms.html>
- Thomas Edsall, “How Much Damage Have Marjorie Taylor Greene and the ‘Bullies’ Done to the G.O.P.?” *NYT* (June 8, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/08/opinion/maga-caucus-squad-congress.html>
- Ira Shapiro, “How Mitch McConnell Wrecked the Senate” *New Republic* (May 6, 2022) <https://newrepublic.com/article/166326/mitch-mcconnell-wrecked-senate>
- Young Voter Survey, Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics (December, 2021) <https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/fall-2021-harvard-youth-poll>

2. What Were the Founding Fathers Thinking?

Reading

- Jack N. Rakove, “From the Old Congress to the New,” in Julian Zelizer, *The American Congress*, 2-22.
- Colin McAuliffe, Data for Progress, “The Senate is an Irredeemable Institution” (December 17, 2019) <https://www.filesforprogress.org/memos/the-senate-is-an-irredeemable-institution.pdf>
- Ira Shapiro, *Broken: Can the Senate Save Itself and the Country?* Chapter 13, “Reconsidering the Senate” 231-251

3. **Tour of the Capitol** [can occur on this or another week of the class]

4. **The Modern Congress**

Reading

- Eric Rauchway, “The Transformation of the Congressional Experience,” in Zelizer, 319-334.
- Ron Elving, Czars And Firebrands: A Brief History Of Power In The House” NPR (October 15, 2015) <https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/10/16/449136598/czars-and-firebrands-a-brief-history-of-power-in-the-house>

5. **Congressional Organization: Leadership, Caucuses, Committees**

Reading

- Roger Davidson, Walter Oleszek, Frances Lee. *Congress and Its Members*. Chapter 8, “Congressional Rules and Procedures,” 215-251
- Bryan Marshall and Bruce Wolpe, *The Committee*. Chapter 1, “Hope and Change Meets the Hill,” 1-17.
- Politico Guide to the Legislative Process (July 30, 2019) https://www.politicopro.com/blog/guide-to-legislation?cid=promkt_19q3_corenews_legg

6. **Diversity on the Hill**

Reading

- Michele Swers, *Women in the Club: Gender and Policy Making in the Senate*, pp 1-23 <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=NnQ-es6oHWAC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Michele+Swers+gender&ots=IHiz-y9nh5&sig=fOjYla9fsm5ldrY3UwdrBghrY78#v=onepage&q=Michele%20Swers%20gender&f=false>
- Kathryn Lyons, “Demeaned, overlooked, fighting back: What it’s like to be a woman in Congress” *Roll Call* (August 5, 2020) <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/08/05/demeaned-overlooked-fighting-women-congress-aoc/>
- Henry Olsen “Republicans are becoming more diverse. That’s a great thing” *Washington Post* (November 17, 2021) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/11/17/republicans-are-becoming-more-diverse-thats-great-thing/>
- Daniel Marans, “A ‘Reset In Black Politics’: Retirements Set Up Battle Over Congressional Black Caucus’s Direction” *HuffPost* (January 21, 2022) <https://ucdc-edu.zoom.us/j/87050129687?pwd=cGV3OGJHQRk0bCZlNWZXL0NucTVBUT09>

- DeSipio, Louis, “Demanding Equal Political Voice...And Accepting Nothing Less: The Quest for Latino Political Inclusion,” in *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study*, pp. 273-287.
- Claudine Gay, *The Effect of Minority Districts and Minority Representation on Political Participation in California*, (2001), Public Policy Institute of California http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_601CGR.pdf
- Christa Case Bryant, “Who’s crafting public policy? A push to diversify Capitol Hill staff” *Christian Science Monitor* (2/8/2022) <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2022/0208/Who-s-crafting-public-policy-A-push-to-diversify-Capitol-Hill-staff> [available in readings as well]
- Jim Saksa, “‘Where am I?’: Black staffers describe hurdles of working on Capitol Hill” Roll Call (February 25, 2021) https://www.rollcall.com/2021/02/25/where-am-i-black-staffers-describe-capitol-hill/?utm_source=&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletters&utm_content=02/28/2021

7. What Happened?

Evaluating the impact of the mid-term election.

Reading: TBD

8. Bean Counting 101: Budgets, Appropriations, Entitlements, CRs, Omnibuses, Minibuses, Sequestration, Fiscal Cliffs, Earmarks and Reconciliation

Reading

- Budget Exercise:
 - **Concord Coalition** <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=5658b5b6b5&attid=0.2&permsgid=msg-f:1724507917979348421&th=170eae08781edc5&view=att&disp=inline>
 - **Center for a Responsible Federal Budget** <https://www.crfb.org/debtfixer>
- Thomas Kahn, “A Democrat Against Deficits” *Wall Street Journal* (July 28, 2021)
- Eric Patashnik, “Congress and the Budget Since 1974,” in Zelizer, *American Congress*, 668-686
- Paul Kane, “Earmark spending went away after corruption scandals. Now, it’s back on the table,” *Washington Post* (March 13, 2021) https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/earmark-congress-spending-cunningham/2021/03/12/cd135fb0-82c2-11eb-ac37-4383f7709abe_story.html

Additional Reading

- Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, “Reconciliation 101” (January 22, 2021) <http://www.crfb.org/papers/reconciliation-101?emci=135b67dc-285c-eb11-a607-00155d43e992&emdi=646334c0-de5c-eb11-a607-00155d43e992&ceid=142324>

9. The Imperial Presidency and the Resurgent Congress

Reading

- Emily Bazelon, “What Happens When a President and Congress Go to War?” *NYT Magazine* (November 5, 2019) https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/magazine/congress-president-impeachment.html?ref=collection%2Fbyline%2Femily-bazelon&action=click&contentCollection=undefined®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection

- Ezra Klein, “The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency, Explained” *Vox* (May 20, 2014) <https://www.vox.com/2014/5/20/5732208/the-green-lantern-theory-of-the-presidency-explained>
- “Rewriting the Limits on Presidential Power,” *CBS News* (August 12, 2020) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rewriting-the-limits-of-presidential-powers/>
- James Surowiecki, “The Perils of Executive Action” *New Yorker* (August 8&15, 2016) <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/08/08/the-perils-of-executive-action>
- Elizabeth Slattery and Andrew Kloster, *An Executive Unbound: The Obama Administration’s Unilateral Actions* (Heritage, 2014) <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/02/an-executive-unbound-the-obama-administrations-unilateral-actions>
- Ellen Nakashima, “‘It breeds resistance’: Even among conservatives, Trump’s use of presidential power causes alarm” *WP* (September 29, 2018) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/it-breeds-resistance-even-among-conservatives-trumps-use-of-presidential-power-causes-alarm/2018/09/29/1769991a-bdbf-11e8-b7d2-0773aa1c33da_story.html?utm_term=.85b390b6dfc3

10. Origins of Polarization

Reading

- Naomi Ehrich Leonard, Keena Lipsitz, Anastasia Bizyaeva, Alessio Franci, and Yphtac Lelkes, “The nonlinear feedback dynamics of asymmetric political polarization” <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/50/e2102149118>
- Dana Milbank, “The GOP is sick. It didn’t start with Trump — and won’t end with him” *Washington Post* (August 4, 2022) **Caution: Strong language.** https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/08/04/dana-milbank-republican-destructionists-book-excerpt/?utm_campaign=wp_follow_dana_milbank&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpsrc=nl_danamilbank&carta-url=https%3A%2F%2F2.washingtonpost.com%2Fcar-ltr%2F378e8e%2F62eb94d4cf68a2160119d76e%2F5977ff0ade4e26514c6e584%2F6%2F19%2F62eba94d4cf68a2160119d76e&wp_cu=395900b352486ac84cb0121da8ef67dd%7C1EDB200A508D49FE050007F01002A40
- Sam Tanenhaus, “The Promise of Polarization” *The New Republic* (October 29, 2018) <https://newrepublic.com/article/151612/promise-polarization-book-review-sam-rosenfeld-the-polarizers>
- David Frum, “How the American Two-Party System Became So Divided” *The Atlantic* (April 8, 2018) <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/the-polarizers-interview/57288/>
- Michael Grunwald, “How Everything Became the Culture War” *Politico Magazine* (Nov-Dec, 2018) <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/11/02/culture-war-liberals-conservatives-trump-2018-222095>
- Finkel, et al., “Political Sectarianism in America,” *Science* (October 30, 2020) <https://pel.stanford.edu/research/2020/finkel-science-political.pdf>; for articles cited, see: <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/370/6516/533#BIBL>
- John Lawrence, “You Don’t Actually Need to Reach Across the Aisle, Mr. Biden,” *New York Times* (April 27, 2021) <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/28/opinion/joe-biden-bipartisanship.html?referringSource=articleShare>
- Drew DeSilver, “The Polarized Congress Of Today Has Its Roots In The 1970s,” *Pew* (June 12, 2014) <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/12/polarized-politics-in-congress-began-in-the-1970s-and-has-been-getting-worse-ever-since/>